

CHAPTER THIRTY

The Center Creek Story *Irrigation*

Through the years, the settlers and residents of Center Creek in eastern Provo Valley have enjoyed abundant living. They have enjoyed a life close to the soil. They have been close to the sun-lit pastures where cattle peacefully graze, and they have been close to the fields where seeds have sprouted and grown to provide food for men. Theirs has been a life of prayer and toil mixed in along each row of seeds sown; of gratitude and thanksgiving with each harvest; and the joy of friends and loved ones close at hand.

Those who first settled the rich, green meadow lands along Center Creek were drawn there by the irrigation water available. Some of these pioneers who built log homes for their families and began clearing the land for farming were Thomas Ross, Joseph Fawcett, Joseph Cluff, James Adams and Jackson Smith.

By early 1861 there were 12 families living along the creek. This soon grew to 20 families, and the population was large enough to organize a branch of the Church. John Harvey moved to the community in 1861 to organize the branch and direct the Church activities. Reports are that the meetings were well attended, with some of the credit undoubtedly going to Ann Harvey who enlivened the meetings by an excellent choir that she trained and directed.

Farming activities in the community continued until 1866 when Indian troubles and the Black Hawk War broke out. The settlers were advised to leave their outlying homes along Center Creek and move closer to the main settlements of Heber. For more than 10 years the lands along Center Creek were uninhabited.

By 1877 the Indian problems were solved and leaders in the valley deemed it safe for those along Center Creek to return to their homes. Many of the original families had become established near Heber City and decided not to return.

Those who were instrumental in reestablishing Center were William Richardson Sr., a Mr. Blancher, Archie Sellers Sr., Joseph Thomas, Benjamin Cluff, George Muir Sr., William Pridey, William Cole, George Hyrum Sweat and Sid Worsley. In 1879 the Worsley homestead was purchased and developed by James Lindsay.

The Center Ward was organized on July 15, 1877 with Benjamin Cluff as Bishop. He chose as his counselors Sidney Worsley and John Harvey. Other counselors who served with Bishop Cluff were John Baird, William Blake and Archibald Richardson.

Because the settlers in Center Creek depended upon farming for their livelihood, irrigation waters were of utmost importance. Some of the earliest community cooperative projects, as well as some of the disputes, transpired because of the need for irrigation water.

The first settlers in the area laid claim to the water in Center Creek and also some of the smaller streams nearby. This meant that new families coming into the area either had to get permission from the older residents to use the water, or look elsewhere for their irrigation needs. The new settlers felt that there was ample water for everyone if it were to be distributed fairly, but try as they would, they couldn't persuade the original settlers to give up much of it.

As a result, many meetings were held in an effort to solve the problem, and it was finally resolved that the newer settlers would go into Center Creek Canyon and look for sites where reservoirs could be built to hold water that was just going to waste. They located and staked out six reservoir sites, and began the task of building the dams. However, the struggles were still not ended because the early settlers then attempted to stop them from filling the dams. Many lively meetings ensued before it was finally decided to organize a reservoir company in 1879 and subsequently the Center Creek Irrigation and Water Company in 1887. Now 72 years later these two companies were consolidated in 1962.

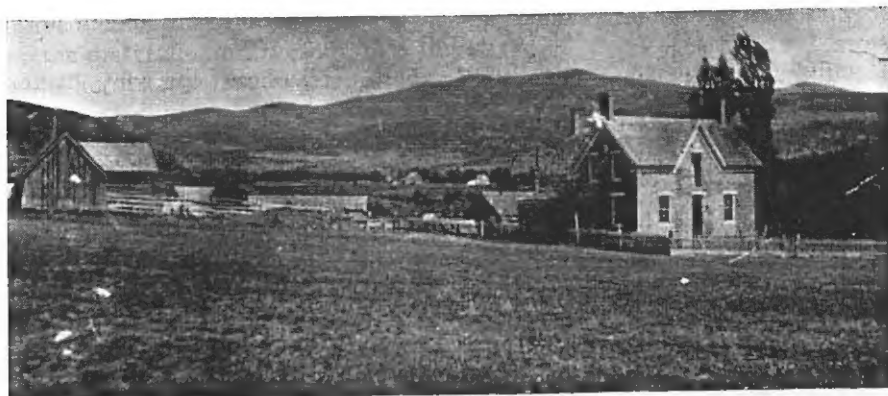
With the organization of the Irrigation Company, the settlement of disputes was left up to the officers and directors, who attempted to be as fair as possible. William Richardson Sr. was the first president of the company. Other officers were Parley Murdock, Archibald Sellers and George Hyrum Sweat.

While the community of Center Creek was growing, another community about two miles north of Center began to develop. This was known as Lake Creek, and began about 1877. Robert Lindsay and his wife Sarah Ann, and William Lindsay and his wife Mary, had been living in Heber, but decided to look around for a site where they might establish more permanent homes. They finally decided on a site three miles east of Heber, near a spring, and in 1877 moved from Heber to begin farming the rich soil.

They built log homes and lived close together until about 1883 when they decided it would be much easier to work the farm land if one family lived in the upper section. They drew lots to see who would move, and Robert got the "cut" to move. He built a two-room log house and later a large, two-story home for his family.

As these men found success in farming the Lake Creek land, others soon began to take up homesteads in the area. Some of these homesteaders included Bengt Peterson, James Nash, William Murdoch Sr., William Baird Sr. and John W. Crook.

An excellent sandstone quarry was developed on property owned by John Crook and Herbert Clegg. The stone was used to build many of



A home built from red sandstone by Thomas Phillips in the early days of the Lake Creek area. This photograph was taken of the home in 1910.

the homes in Center Creek, Lake Creek, Heber and even in Salt Lake City. Some of the buildings constructed of the stone were the Stake House and County Court House, the jail and the Central and North Schools, all in Heber. The sand stone was also used for sidewalks and for lining graves.

Lake Creek settlers also had their irrigation water problems as the population began to grow, and on May 2, 1888 the farmers of the area met to formulate plans for an irrigation company. An organizing committee was formed with Robert Broadhead as chairman and Robert Clegg as secretary. By July 6, 1888 the company organization was ready and Mr. Broadhead was elected as the first president. William Lindsay was named secretary with Henry Chatwin as treasurer and John Lee and Henry Clegg as directors.

First stockholders in the company were Henry Clegg, Robert Broadhead, John Lee, Henry Chatwin, James Nash, Elizabeth Nash, a Mrs. Phillips, John Baird, William Baird, James Baird, Robert and William Lindsay, Milton and William Murdoch, Orson Lee, Abram Hatch, Bengt Peterson, Mrs. Elisha Jones, Richard Jones, Thomas Campbell, William Blake, Mrs. William Cole, Eric Erickson, William Priestly, John Lloyd, Nels and Ludwig Anderson, Thomas and William Clegg, William Davis, Rasmus Miller, Rasmus Anderson and Charles W. Giles.

For several years the Lake Creek settlement continued, and separate school and church organizations were developed. However, it was gradually assimilated into the Center Creek development and became part of that community.

Industry in Center Creek has largely centered around farming. However, one of the first sawmills in the valley was constructed in Center Creek Canyon by Henry McMullin, William M. Wall and James Adams.

A general store was opened by William Baxter, who also operated a creamery. He bought milk from the farmers, made it into butter and

then took it to Park City where he sold it and bought goods to sell in his store.

Other industry has included a separate telephone company, water-works and a power company.

The telephone company was organized January 27, 1905 as a co-operative venture with Daniel. The line was brought from Heber City by way of Daniels Creek. Men from both communities went into the canyons to cut and haul red pine poles to build the five miles of telephone line necessary. Each family desiring service agreed to buy his own telephone, do the necessary installation work and pay an equal share of the cash outlay for wire and insulators. It was also agreed that each family would pay 75 cents per month for service.

By 1912 the Center and Daniel Telephone Company was ready for corporate organization and the articles of incorporation were signed January 15, 1912.

Repair work was done by the subscribers themselves; which often proved a task. When the circuit was broken, someone would volunteer to find the trouble, often having to wade through mud or water or snow in the winter, and then often not being able to locate the trouble spot immediately.

As more telephones were added the two communities formed their own separate companies in 1932. Finally in 1960 and 1961 the companies were merged in the Mountain States Telephone and Telegraph Company.

The community water works was formed in 1915 with the source of supply a spring about three miles into Center Creek Canyon. A trench to bring the water into the community was dug with only hand labor. Because the community was not incorporated, it was not able to borrow funds to buy materials to complete the water line. So three individuals,



Albert Giles makes the last telephone call from his home in Center Creek on the old party line before the telephone system was changed to modern equipment in 1961.

James Lindsay, Hugh W. Harvey and James W. Clyde signed a note for the materials and the line was completed.

The electric line to Center Creek was also installed by individuals in the community, but then turned over to the Heber Light and Power Company for service and maintenance.

Farming activities in the early days of Center Creek were strenuous, and required hard labor from sun-up to sunset. Clearing the land of sage brush was one of the first tasks that the early homesteaders faced. Some would use ox teams, while others used horses. There was still a lot of hand digging involved, in spite of the animals.

As the land was cleared, the brush would be thrown aside and the youngsters would gather it up in huge piles ready for evening "burning contests." Each family tried to get the biggest pile so that its flames would shoot highest in the evening sky. Often times the children would join in torch races with blazing sage brush branches. Casualties were few, but every now and then someone would catch afire and then everyone would stop their games to dip the unfortunate one in the irrigation ditch.

Other farm activities included building fences, mangers, outbuildings, feed boxes, digging and building deep pits for storing carrots, potatoes or turnips, and of course, hauling manure from the corrals to the fields. Each fall all the menfolk went into the canyons to work on the reservoirs.

Keeping a supply of firewood on hand was always a big problem, and the men and boys spent many days in the hills bringing in a winter's supply of wood.

Caring for the animals on the farm also required constant labor, including feeding, milking the cows, tending herds of sheep, shoeing the horses and breaking in the young animals.

Even taking a bath in the old farm homes was a chore. The bath began several hours in advance when a hot fire would be built in the stove. Then water would be carried in from the spring or the well and heated in the large boilers or kettles on the stove.

Meanwhile, the wash tub would be positioned near the stove, with a couple of chairs and a blanket generally used to make the bath a little more private.

Then, when the water was at the right temperature, the bath could begin. However, if you found that the water was either too hot or too cold, troublesome adjustments had to be made with dippers or tea kettles.

With the bath finally over, the water had to be emptied and the boilers, the tub and all the kettles cleaned up and returned to their proper places.

When more than one active youngster took a bath at a time, mothers usually had to watch their offspring quite carefully to see that their "horseplay" didn't carry them too close to the hot stove, lest they carry a "Saturday night bath brand" with them for a week or so.